Central Electric Power Cooperative

McClellanville 115-kV Transmission Line Project

Newsletter

Volume 1, No. 2 December 2010

In This Issue:

Due to a mailing list error, our records indicate that you may not have received the first issue of this newsletter. RUS apologizes for this mistake and has extended the current comment period. Please read this newsletter for more details.

RUS-Providing Reliable Electricity to Rural Communities

The Electric Program of USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides leadership and capital to upgrade, expand, maintain, and replace America's vast rural electric infrastructure. Under authority of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936, the Program makes loans and loan guarantees for construction of electric distribution, transmission, and generation facilities, including system improvements and replacements to furnish and improve electric service in rural areas.

RUS is considering providing financial assistance to Central Electric Power Cooperative Inc. (CEPCI) to construct a 115-kV transmission line from one of several possible power source points in the McClellanville area to Berkeley Electric Cooperative's proposed new McClellanville substation to provide long-term reliable electric service to the community and surrounding areas.

McClellanville and the surrounding communities are located in an area lacking existing transmission infrastructure and is currently served from an extremely long distribution line. Over the years, this has resulted in a larger number of outages, with longer durations than considered acceptable. Voltage drops and sags have also been common, making this an area with very poor power quality.

What is Scoping?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that all federal agencies complete an analysis, showing how their actions may affect the human environment. For RUS, such an analysis is required before it decides to finance a project. RUS has decided to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for CEPCI's proposed project. An EIS is required for projects that may have a significant affect to the human environment. Prior to preparing an EIS, RUS invites agencies and the general public to participate in the planning of the EIS – that is, in defining its **scope**. The "Environmental Review Process" insert provides information on scoping and the general EIS-process.

Note: Even if significant impacts are likely to occur, this does not necessarily mean a project may not go forward; rather, it would require an agency to try to find ways to make the impacts less harmful.

Scoping & Public Involvement

History:
December 14, 2005: RUS held a public meeting and gathered information about potential impacts that the project could have to the human environment. Agency and pubic comments were summarized in a scoping summary report (October 2007). RUS evaluated the comments and decided to prepare an EIS.

September 29, 2010: RUS held a second public meeting at the St. James-Santee Elementary School in McClellanville. RUS notified the public through the local media and the first edition of this newsletter. Updated project information was presented at the meeting, and comments were gathered. Copies of meeting materials and updated studies are available for viewing at the website listed on page 4.

Current:
After the meeting was held, RUS was informed that an error in the mailing distribution list may have caused a large number of residents and property owners in Charleston County to not receive the first edition of this newsletter.

With the second edition of the newsletter, RUS has extended the scoping period to January 14, 2011 and added the new Commonwealth alternative. A scoping summary report will be issued in February 2011.

Macro-Corridor GIS Modeling Analysis: Identifying Lowest-Risk Routes

The alternative transmission line corridors described here were developed through an RUS-required Macro-Corridor Study. When a proponent requests RUS funding for a project that involves a linear feature (transmission line or pipeline), a Macro-Corridor Study is performed to identify alternative routes based on their environmental, engineering, economic, land use, and permitting constraints. The set of alternative routes may be evaluated further in an EIS where the EIS will find one or more corridors most suitable for the placement of a transmission line.

To develop the alternative corridors, a wide variety of mapped information on the environmental and cultural resources, land use, and other physical features of the McClellanville study area were gathered and analyzed using a computer system known as a Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS was used to place numeric ratings on each type of resource to characterize the level of higher risk—areas that the transmission line should try to avoid—and areas of lower risk, like existing power line rights-of-way that would be more suitable for a transmission line. Overlaying all these ratings, the GIS created a composite "risk surface" map with areas of low-risk and high-risk. From existing power sources, the GIS then mathematically found a path to McClellanville that went through low risk areas and avoided high risk areas. Also using the risk surface map, corridors varying in width from a few hundred feet up to a mile were created along the lowest risk paths. The corridors will be the focus of the analysis of transmission line impacts, and when the NEPA review is completed, if it is decided to construct a line in a particular corridor, it will ultimately allow CEPCI flexibility in placing the on-ground alignment to avoid sensitive resources.

Alternative Transmission Line Route Corridors

RUS may finance the construction of a new transmission line to McClellanville from one of two existing power sources— Charity or Jamestown— or from one of three other potential source points that are not yet built—a Belle Isle switching or a step-down switching station built on the 230-kV line at Honey Hill or at Britton Neck. The map shows the alternative corridors.

Belle Isle and Britton Neck Corridors

The **Belle Isle 1** corridor runs from the Belle Isle power source along Highway 17 for approximately 4 miles to the North Santee River. Using an overhead transmission line, it crosses the Santee Rivers 1 to 2 miles northwest of the U.S. Hwy 17 bridge and continues to the proposed McClellanville substation along a path roughly parallel to Hwy 17. **Belle Isle 2** begins at the Belle Isle source, but rather than using an overhead line, it crosses the 2-mile wide Santee River Delta using directional boring to place the line under the surface substrate of the Delta. The corridor would then travel roughly parallel to and northwest of Highway 17 to the proposed McClellanville substation. To evaluate the idea of using the Hwy 17 right-of-way as a corridor, **Belle Isle 3** was created by modeling the lowest risk path within a strip one mile wide on either side of Hwy 17. The resulting path does not stray outside of the one mile buffer of Highway 17. The resulting corridor essentially follows Hwy 17 from the Belle Isle delivery point to the proposed McClellanville substation.

The **Britton Neck** corridor originates at optional power step-down station sites, located two miles apart, along the 230-kV transmission line that runs south from the Winyah Generation Plant through the Francis Marion National Forest (FMNF). If selected, a final location for the step-down station would be chosen based on environmental field surveys and engineering analyses. Because the alignments of the Britton Neck 1 and 2 merge into a single path just west of State 224 and north of the North Santee River, the paths were combined into a single route. The corridor then runs south across the Santee Rivers, east of Hampton Plantation and across predominately private forest land to the proposed McClellanville substation.

Jamestown and Honey Hill Corridors

The **Jamestown** corridor begins at the Jamestown power source and travels southeast through primarily National Forest land, roughly paralleling State Highway 45. It crosses the 230-kV transmission line near Honey Hill. The corridor then follows State Hwy 45 to cross a wilderness linkage management area (MA29), passes south of Wambaw Creek Wilderness before continuing to the proposed McClellanville substation.

The **Honey Hill** corridor begins at a step-down point along the existing Charity to Winyah 230-kV right-of-way about 1 mile southwest of its crossing of State Hwy 45. The corridor runs southeast, aligns with State Hwy 45 to cross MA29, passes south of the Wambaw Creek Wilderness before continuing on to the proposed McClellanville substation.

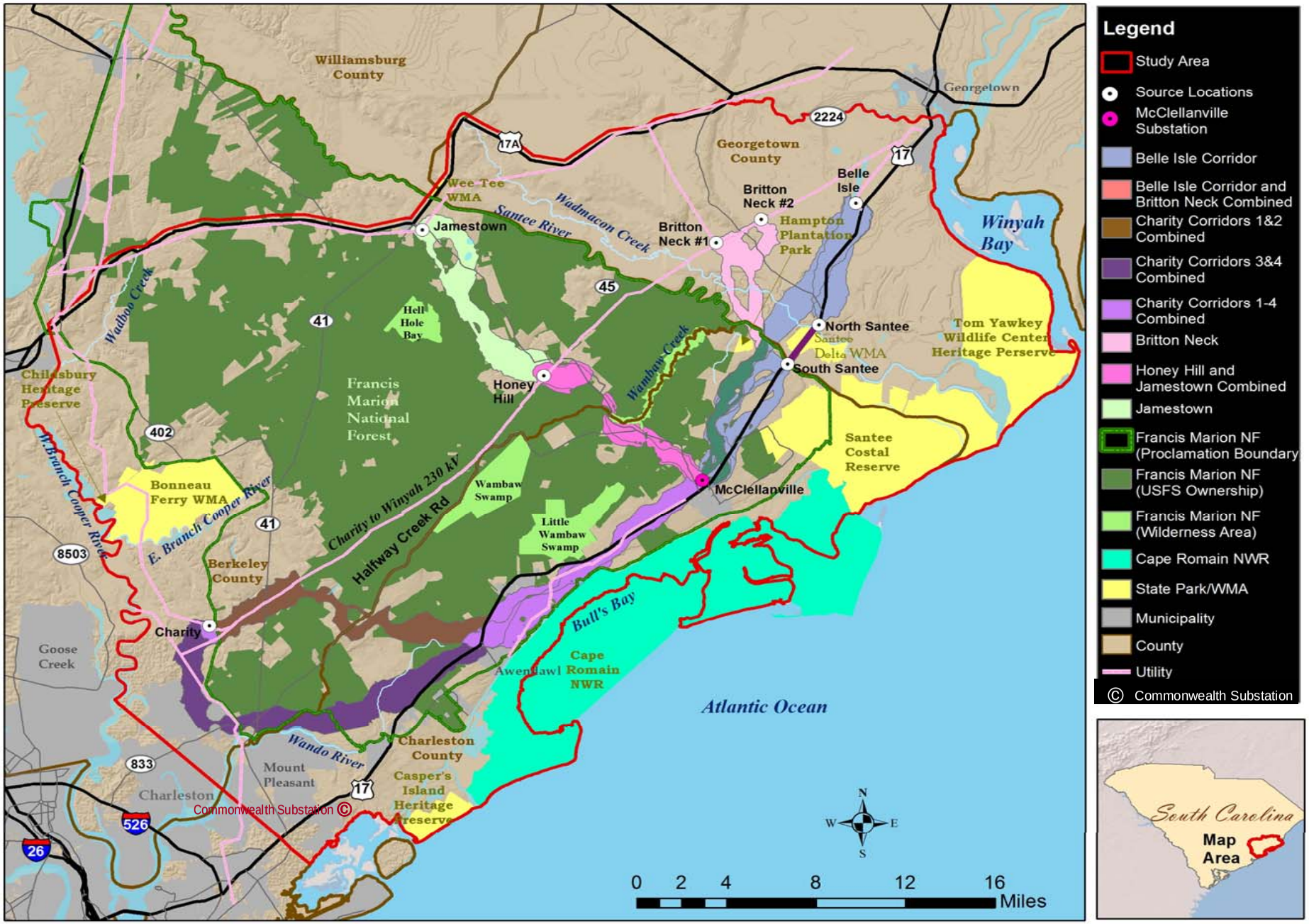
Charity Corridors

Of the four Charity corridors, two cross the National Forest; two were directed south to avoid the NF. The **Charity 1** corridor starts at the Charity power source, parallels the Charity to Winyah 230-kV transmission line for 4 miles and then shifts southeast through an area of the FMNF with numerous red-cockaded woodpecker colonies until it reaches Hwy 17. It then travels east, roughly paralleling Hwy 17 to the proposed McClellanville substation. **Charity 2** is the same as described for Charity 1 west of Hwy 17; east of 17, it travels a similar path, except it is directed to run closer to the highway than Charity 1. The **Charity 3** corridor runs south from the Charity power source then east, generally around the National Forest. This directed route was created as an alternative alignment that avoids an area on the National Forest with a high density of red-cockaded woodpecker colonies. The **Charity 4** corridor is a combination of the directed alignment west of Hwy 17 and the directed alignment east of the Highway 17 of Charity 2.

Commonwealth Alternative

A new alternative that was not evaluated in the Macro-Corridor Study was identified early during the current scoping period. The Commonwealth line is a recently built 115-kV transmission line between Hamlin and the Commonwealth substation located at 1218 Lieben Road, Mt Pleasant, SC, 29464 (see map page 3). The new alternative route corridor would extend the transmission line northeast from the Commonwealth substation parallel to Hwy 17, use the portion of the Charity route corridors that parallels Hwy 17, and end at the McClellanville substation.

Alternative Macro-Corridor Project Areas



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Postage

Address

Notice of Extension of Public Scoping Comment Period and Request for Comments

McClellanville 115-kV Transmission Line Project

Proposed Project: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., (CEPCI) proposal is to construct a 115-kV transmission line to Berkeley Electric Cooperative's McClellanville Substation to provide long-term reliable electric service to the community and surrounding areas. The project would greatly reduce the number and length of extended outages in the area, as well as the number of momentary interruptions (or blinks). CEPCI is requesting that RUS provide financial assistance for the proposed project.

Extension of Scoping Period: Due to a mailing list error in Charleston County and the addition of the Commonwealth alternative, RUS has extended the public comment period to January 14, 2011. The Commonwealth line is a recently built 115-kV transmission line between Hamlin and the Commonwealth substation, located at 1218 Lieben Road, Mt. Pleasant, SC. The new alternative route corridor would extend the transmission line northeast from the Commonwealth substation parallel to Hwy 17, use the portion of the Charity route corridors that parallels Hwy 17, and end at the McClellanville substation. This newsletter is being sent to property owners and residents in Charleston County; other property owners and interested parties are being notified by postcard or through local media.

Commenting on the Project: Send all written comments to Ms. Lauren McGee, Environmental Scientist, USDA/RUS, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 1571, Room 2244-S, Washington, DC 20250–1571. Comments may also be sent by fax to: (202) 690-0649 or by e-mail to: *lauren.mcgee@wdc.udsa.gov*.

Background Information: Newsletters, meeting materials, studies, and reports can be downloaded from the RUS website by clicking on the "Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc." link at: *http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm*. For project information, please call Bill Rogers, CEPCI, at the following toll-free phone number: (855) 806-8863.

Dear property owner or interested party: This is to notify you that the Public Scoping Comment Period on the McClellanville 115-kV Transmission Line Project has been extended to January 14, 2011.

Summary: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., (CEPCI) proposal to construct a 115-kV transmission line to McClellanville to provide long-term reliable electric service to the community and surrounding areas. Due to a mailing list error in Charleston County and the addition of the Commonwealth alternative, RUS has extended the public comment period. The Commonwealth line is an existing 115-kV transmission line starting at the Hamlin substation and ending at the Commonwealth substation, located at 1218 Lieben Road in Mt. Pleasant. The new alternative would extend the transmission line northeast from the Commonwealth substation parallel to Hwy 17, use the portion of the Charity route corridors that parallels Hwy 17, and end at the McClellanville substation. A revised newsletter (see RUS website) is being sent to property owners in Charleston County.
Commenting on the Project: Send written comments to Lauren McGee, Environmental Scientist, USDA/RUS, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 1571, Room 2244-S, Washington, DC 20250–1571. Comments may also be sent by fax to: (202) 690-0649 or by e-mail to: ***lauren.mcgee@wdc.udsa.gov***. A scoping summary report will be issued in February 2011.
Background Information: Newsletters, meeting materials, studies, and reports can be downloaded from the RUS website by clicking on the "Central Electric Power Cooperative, Inc." link at: http://www.usda.gov/rus/water/ees/eis.htm. For project information, please contact Bill Rogers, CEPCI, at the following toll free phone number: (855) 806-8863.

Thank you.